



NEWS RELEASE

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APG cyanide cylinder destruction complete *Explosive Destruction System emphasizes safety*

ABERDEEN PROVING GROUND, Md. – Aberdeen Proving Ground and the U.S. Army Non-Stockpile Chemical Materiel Project (NSCMP) safely neutralized seven cylinders of hydrogen cyanide and a cylinder of cyanogen chloride using the Army's Explosive Destruction System (EDS) here between April 26 and May 7.

The mission began after a cylinder ruptured inside an Edgewood Chemical Biological Center (ECBC) laboratory during the early morning hours of April 16. While there was some damage to the laboratory, no one was injured and emergency responders detected no hydrogen cyanide following the blast. Army officials immediately began investigating the cause of the blast and ways to destroy other cylinders of hydrogen cyanide still stored in post facilities.

The APG Garrison requested assistance from the NSCMP. Working with the Garrison, ECBC, Sandia National Laboratories and Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC), NSCMP made the EDS available.

The EDS, used primarily for transportable destruction and neutralization of recovered chemical warfare materiel, provided an environmentally safe answer for the destruction of the potentially unstable cylinders. The EDS had conducted acceptance tests with hydrogen cyanide, but had never treated this type of commercial cyanide cylinder in the system's airtight chamber.

"This has been a well-planned, safely-executed effort by everyone involved," said Larry Gottschalk, Non-Stockpile project manager. "The planning and execution of this operation involved a great deal of coordination by a number of people in a short amount of time."

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“This is where the teams came together,” said Allan Caplan of NSCMP’s system operations team, explaining that at the first hint of the mission, engineers from NSCMP, Sandia National Laboratories, which developed the EDS, ECBC and SAIC immediately began collecting data on hydrogen cyanide’s reaction potential and explosive capability.

The data collected suggested there would be no problem treating the cylinders in the EDS,” Caplan said. “It’s a new chapter for the EDS, and a proven success story for all the organizations represented.”

The EDS began cyanide operations April 26, and completed neutralization of the first three cylinders April 28, with ECBC experts slowly and carefully moving the cylinders. The remaining four cylinders, plus a cylinder of cyanogen chloride that had been badly damaged in the April 16 incident, were safely processed May 7.

“Not enough can be said about the ECBC crews that run the EDS,” said Bill Brankowitz, deputy project manager for NSCMP. “They are the people on the front line that are making the solution to this difficult problem happen. This is difficult, dangerous work, and my hat is off to them, and to the SAIC and Sandia support teams.”

The U.S. Army Non-Stockpile Chemical Materiel Project leads the nation in the development and use of advanced technology to eliminate America’s non-stockpile chemical materiel in a safe, environmentally sound, cost-effective manner.

Since 1999, NSCMP has built a solid performance and safety record with the EDS through successful missions at sites such as Rocky Mountain Arsenal, Colo., and the former Camp Sibert, Ala. In 2003, NSCMP used the EDS to successfully treat 15 World War I-era 75 mm mustard agent projectiles, recovered at a burial site in the Spring Valley area of northwest Washington, D.C. Last summer, the EDS treated items at Dugway Proving Ground, Utah, and in the fall treated a recovered mustard agent munition at Dover Air Force Base, Del.

A division of the U.S. Army’s Chemical Materials Agency, NSCMP researches, develops and implements treatment options and destruction plans that comply with all federal, state and local regulations and encourages public participation in its activities. For additional information visit the NSCMP Web site at <http://www.cma.army.mil/nscmp.aspx>.